

REMARKS

Upon entry of the present amendment, claims 2-5 and 7-11 will be pending, of which claims 4, 7 and 10 are independent. Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and allowance in view of the forgoing amendments and the following remarks.

Applicant notes with appreciation the Interview granted on December 9, 2004 wherein the novel features of independent claim 1 were discussed in light of the prior art.

Applicant notes with appreciation the Interview granted on February 2, 2005 wherein the novel features of independent claim 6 were discussed in light of the prior art.

While agreement was not reached during the interviews regarding claims 1 and 6, which Applicant maintains are allowable, in order to expedite issuance of the allowed claims, claims 1 and 6 have been cancelled.

Applicant notes that claims 4 and 5 have been allowed.

Applicant also notes that claims 7, 9, 10 and 11 contain allowable subject matter.

Applicant has amended the specification to reflect the status of the parent application.

The Examiner has objected to claims 7, 9, 10, and 11 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. Claims 7 and 10 are now in independent form and hence in condition for allowance. Accordingly, Applicant requests withdrawal of Examiner's objection to claims 7 and 10 and full allowance of same.

Claims 9 and 11 depend from and further limit, in a patentable sense, independent claims 7 and 10, respectively. Thus, claims 9 and 11 are also in condition for allowance. Accordingly, Applicant requests withdrawal of Examiner's objection to claims 9 and 11 and full allowance of same.

The Examiner has rejected claims 1-3 under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over US Patent No. 5,900,738 to Khandros et al. ("Khandros") in view of either US Patent No. 6,496,023 to Kanamaru et al. ("Kanamaru") or US Patent No. 6,646,455 B2 to Maekawa et al. ("Maekawa") and further in view of US Patent No. 6,125,042 to Verdi et al ("Verdi"). Claim 1 has been cancelled, thereby rendering Examiner's present rejection moot. Applicant reserves the right to further prosecute claim 1 in a continuation application.

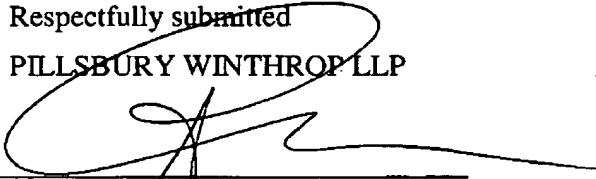
Claims 2 and 3 now depend from and further limit, in a patentable sense, independent claim 10. Thus, claims 2 and 3 are also in condition for allowance. Accordingly, Applicant requests withdrawal of Examiner's rejection of claims 2 and 3 and full allowance of same.

The Examiner rejected claims 6 and 8 under 35 USC § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Khandros in view of Kanamaru or Maekawa and further in view of Verdi. Claim 6 has been cancelled, thereby rendering Examiner's present rejection moot.

Claim 8 now depends from and further limits, in a patentable sense, independent claim 7. Thus, claim 8 is also in condition for allowance. Accordingly, Applicant requests withdrawal of Examiner's rejection of claim 8 and full allowance of same.

Conclusion

All objections and rejections having been addressed, and in view of the foregoing, the claims are believed to be in form for allowance, and such action is hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, he is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number below.

Respectfully submitted
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